



**Opening address**  
**by**  
**the President of Iceland,**  
**Guðni Th. Jóhannesson,**  
**at**  
**Cryosphere 2022:**  
**International Symposium on Ice, Snow and**  
**Water in a Warming World**

**Reykjavík, 22 August 2022**

Dear Secretary-General of the WMO,  
Iceland's Minister of Environment, Energy and Climate,  
Director-General of the Icelandic Met Office,  
organizers of this great conference,  
keynote speakers and other participants,  
kæru vinir – dear friends.

It gives me great pleasure to open this impressive conference, this important conference. Yes, I welcome you all, in particular those who have come from abroad. I hope you have a nice time here in Iceland. I hope you will feel the warmth here – even though there is little or no volcanic activity going on as we speak, and even though we worry about a warming world. There is good warmth and there is bad warmth.

Ice, Snow, and Water. You've come to the right place. We're in Iceland, the only country in the world with ice in its name. Snow: I do not like clichés but I'm tempted to mention that in Icelandic you can find almost 50 words for snow and snowfall, from short and transparent words like “snjór” and “snær” to colourful descriptions like “lausamjöll” and “kafaldshjastur”, not to mention the wonderful “hundslappadrífa” – i.e. flakes that come down in calm weather, as big as the paw of a dog.

Water: We are, have been and will be surrounded by water. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century, fisheries formed the foundation of our welfare state. We need clean oceans. We will be harmed by increased acidification of the oceans. We will be harmed by warmer oceans.

Ice, snow and water: They come together in the cryosphere. From where I grew up and where I now reside, you can see across the bay the beautiful Snæfellsjökull, literally in English Snow-mountain-glacier. It is where you enter the earth, according to Jules Verne. It is a living laboratory on climate change. Its icecap is receding before our eyes.

Now, has something like that not happened before? And wasn't Iceland once covered in ice? Have there not been changes before, from hot to cold, to cold to hot? You will have heard these questions. Yes, we know all this, but never before has humankind affected climate in the fast way that we witness every day. That is the big difference between then and now.

We need to control our footprint on mother earth. We need to base our steps on the wisdom that science brings. Our science must be based on observation and arguments, established methods and healthy scepticism, frank exchange of ideas and information, and constant interaction between experts and academia on the one hand, and policy makers and the general public on the other.

I believe that a strong link like this exists in Iceland. Glaciologists and weatherpersons are household names, and we usually chat about the weather when we meet up. It's such an integral part of our existence.

This conference is held to commemorate the one hundredth anniversary of Veðurstofa Íslands, the Icelandic Met Office. I use this opportunity to thank its staff for its service to the nation throughout the years. I know they cannot improve the weather for us and it does no good either to look instead at foreign weather forecasts – although we're sometimes tempted to try that in the end.

Let's instead focus on what we can do. Let us learn about nature, let us learn about our cryosphere, and let us see how we can change the world for the better.

I declare this conference open and wish you all a fruitful meeting of minds here in Iceland.